

Mia Monroe

A Rare Spot for an Owl

Nearly 10,000 people visit Muir Woods National Monument each day during daylight hours, thus missing a special nocturnal resident of this old-growth redwood forest, the northern spotted owl. To help people appreciate the value of protecting this forest for rare and endangered species, a spotted owl specimen from the park collections is on public display. Special ultraviolet filtering plexiglass protects the owl and it is behind the one window that does not open.

The specimen was donated to the park with all of the proper permits. It was donated because Muir Woods would be a highly visible location for public education. Some side benefits have included being able to use the specimen when training the volunteer owl-monitoring corps and matching up feathers to confirm owl presence in other areas.

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Bob Chenoweth and Linda Paisano

Sapatqayn, Nakia's Link to the Past

Nez Perce National Historical Park (NEPE) is centered on the Nez Perce Reservation in North Central Idaho. It is rather unusual in that it consists of 38 disconnected sites scattered though Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Sites include traditional Nez Perce campsites, geologic features associated with Nez Perce creation stories and stories of Coyote's many adventures, the old officer's quarters at Ft. Lapwai, battle sites associated with the Nez Perce War of 1877, and sites associated with several missionary enterprises. NEPE's museum collections are as varied as are the sites. They include the herbarium from the

Big Hole Battlefield, furnishings from Watson's General Store in Spalding, firearms used by Nez Perce warriors and U.S. Army soldiers, and an extensive collection of ethnographic material and historic photography.

Nakia Williamson, a 20-year-old gifted Nez Perce artist, began researching the Nez Perce National Historical Park photo collection when he was in high school, to inspire his artistic pursuits and better understand his Nez Perce ancestry. He is now a student at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This summer he has an internship from the Museum Studies program to work at Nez Perce National Historical Park. Nakia works in the Cultural Resource Branch getting practical experience with the Park's photo collection, record keeping and the care and storage of artifacts.

While looking at objects in the collection associated with horse use and some ceremonial clothing, Nakia and author Linda Paisano came upon an eagle feather bustle used as part of dance regalia. The bustle had three parts consisting of an inside layer made of tail feathers, a layer where feathers had been trimmed in half to nestle against an outer layer which had been partially trimmed. Attached to each outer feather was a 2"-3" length of fine braided horsehair and attached to the end of this was down fluff.

Nakia and Linda with eagle feather bustle. Photo by Bob Chenoweth.



Nakia admired the craftsmanship and explained how parts were assembled, why certain materials were used, and why this was characteristically Nez Perce. He had the practical knowledge of how things are assembled but also an artist's perception, an appreciation of design quality and beauty of the pieces in the collection. Nakia explained that being able to examine our collection meant a great deal to him, not only for artistic inspiration but for the deepening understanding of his own cultural roots, for a better appreciation of the talents and sense of aesthetic that defines being Nez Perce.

This represents the primary reason why we keep and preserve collections, at least from the cultural point of view. People are able to see the past through the object, to understand how things were done, and to deepen their appreciation for why they were done. When these objects are examined by someone who is Nez Perce, with fam-

ily stories, with cultural ties, the link to the past is strengthened, the vision of the future is made more clear. Non-Indian visitors are able to see the richness and creativity of another culture. The window of understanding can be opened and a greater appreciation gained for the diversity of American life.

* Sapatquayn in Nez Perce is "a showing of objects."

Bob Chenoweth wrote this article from an idea that came from Linda Paisano. Bob is Curator and Cultural Resource Manager for Nez Perce National Historical Park in Spalding, Idaho. Linda is a Museum Technician who is also a member of the Makah Tribe. They work together caring for a large ethnographic collection, a growing historic photo collection and archives/library, and handle compliance-related issues for the vast and diverse 38-site park.

Felice S. Ciccione

Rediscovering Resources

Pointed projectile, Gateway National Recreation Area. Photo by Klaus A. Schnitzer.

Gateway National Recreation Area is comprised of three units. In New York there is Jamaica Bay/Breezy Point and Staten Island, and in New Jersey there is Sandy Hook. While these sites are used by visitors primarily for their recreation opportunities, they have a diverse military history that binds them together. This history includes coastal defense fortifications, airfields, an anti-aircraft battery, and Nike missile sites. These diverse defensive areas are all tied to the defense of New York.

The unique history of each of the different units of Gateway has given us the opportunity to obtain a diverse museum collection. Our collection is comprised of uniforms, letters, photographs, ordnance, newspapers, structural samples, maps, firearms, and architectural drawings. It is this diversity that has allowed us to use the objects in different formats.

Many types of objects are used within the park for research about the history of the park. Before doing any restoration work, the photographs and architectural drawings are consulted to make certain that work we will be doing is as historically accurate as possible. These drawings are also consulted by the personnel before major work is done on the grounds. This helps the staff to determine if any cables or pipes may be in the area in which they need to work and they can alter their plans accordingly.

Archeologists also consult the blueprints and maps in the collection to assist them in determining where possible archeological sites may be located. These same archeologists have also used the collection to help determine the age and type of sites that have been accidentally uncovered due to work occurring on the grounds.

Our maps and plot plans will become an invaluable tool if and when our GIS program becomes a reality. Due to the shifting coastlines of many of Gateway's sites over time, it is the structures that we will use as our consistent landmarks.

Our three-dimensional objects also play a major role in areas other than exhibitry. Many of our objects teach us about our sites in a way that written history cannot. For example, Sandy Hook was used as the United States Proving Grounds prior to the Proving Grounds being located at Aberdeen, Maryland. As a result of the most recent unexploded ordnance sweep on Sandy Hook (there have been others in the past), we have made several interesting discoveries.

One of these finds was what we initially thought was a Civil War era experimental projectile. Subsequent conservation work and research uncovered that our find was actually an experimental projectile of David Lyle, used to rescue people from sinking ships and bring them to shore via mechanical means. The projectile would be shot

